

Unite yourselves to my petition to Holy Mary, *Regina Pacis*, so that she may obtain for us from heaven the true peace that comes when divine grace enters into the depths of our souls. Thus we will be able to make known to so many persons the unique happiness of being children of God, also in these sorrowful circumstances.

With all affection, I send you the blessing of Blessed Josemaria and Don Álvaro.

Your Father

✠ Javier

San Jose September 21, 2001

Message sent to the conference entitled "Towards a More Fully Human Education: the Thought of Josemaria Escrivá"

I extend my warm greetings to all the participants in the Hispanic-American Congress, which will study the impact of Blessed Josemaria Escrivá's teachings in the field of education. This gathering in San Jose, Costa Rica, is one of many events being held throughout the world to commemorate the hundredth anniversary, on January 9, 2002, of the birth of the Founder of Opus Dei. These initiatives are being organized by men and women who want to express their gratitude to this holy priest for having so

faithfully followed God's will. Blessed Josemaria has been a faithful instrument, since 1928, in reminding the Church of the universal call to sanctity and apostolate through the conscientious fulfillment of one's professional work and ordinary daily duties.

I want to express my gratitude for the organization of this congress, which will serve to make the holy life and teachings of Blessed Josemaria more widely known. I also feel it's my duty to add that this is a well-deserved homage. When the organizers of the Congress told me the theme of the gathering and asked me for some introductory words, my first thought was that the best name that could be applied to the Founder of Opus Dei—after the word *priest*, so fundamental to the accomplishment of his ecclesial mission, was precisely that of *teacher*. Right from his student days in the Saragossa seminary, when he was named a prefect at the age of twenty, his ability to guide souls became apparent, along with his great capacity to love. Later throughout his life, in his priestly work and in his foundational mission at the head of Opus Dei, he guided thousands of persons along arduous spiritual paths, teaching them how to discern God's will and conform their conduct to what He was asking of them.

For years, I had the immense good fortune of being at Blessed Josemaria's side, dealing with him as a son. I recall very well his joy when speaking of those who dedicated themselves to the noble and indispensable task of education at all levels. When recalling those who had contributed to his own human and spiritual growth, he ex-

pressed great joy and sincere gratitude. In first place, of course, he thought of his parents. Undoubtedly the first and most important school is one's own home, the example and instruction of one's parents, engraved—for good or, unfortunately, for evil—on the impressionable souls of children. Blessed Josemaria would then immediately go on to mention his debt to other teachers: the nun who taught him how to read, the teachers he had in high school and, later, those during his university studies both in the civil and ecclesiastical fields. He preserved an affectionate memory of many of them right to the end of his life, and would recall their guidance in small points that had helped to strengthen human and Christian virtues in his life.

I also recall how on his catechetical trips (as he called those get-togethers with small and large groups of people held in the last years of his life to talk about the concerns of God) he wanted to learn from those he met. He went to those gatherings with the sincere desire to deepen his formation, with the same eagerness to learn that he had as a child. Even though a consummate teacher, he loved to learn from the example of others.

There is no opposition between the two. What is more, a person can only become a true teacher if he truly wants to grow in his knowledge. A person who fails to cultivate in his soul the disposition, made up of humility and docility, to learn from others, may accumulate an encyclopedic amount of knowledge, and may even become an efficient professor. But he will never be a *teacher*, in the highest and noblest sense of the term.

Many prestigious figures will take part in the sessions of the Congress. I am sure that their addresses and communications will point to Blessed Josemaria's important contributions in the field of education, thanks above all to the many initiatives in this area—fruit of his personal impetus and the spirit of Opus Dei—that have taken on life all over the world. But don't forget the great lesson that he imparted to all of us through his own life—a consequence of his faithfulness to God's will.

Although from the human point of view he considered himself in debt to many different people, it is no less certain that in the fulfillment of the universal mission that he received in 1928, he considered himself greatly in debt to God. Faced with the immense task Heaven had entrusted to him—to teach men and women how to convert their professional work and their family and social duties into a pathway of holiness, and to facilitate this for them—he used to say that his Teacher here had been the Holy Spirit. And because he showed himself so docile to God's inspirations from the first moment, he was able to become a teacher of spiritual life for the millions of people who have benefited from his spirit and teachings throughout the whole world.

With the desire that you follow the example of Blessed Josemaria, and appealing to the Blessed Virgin, *Sedes Sapientiae*, as intercessor, I send you my most affectionate blessing, together with the ardent wish that these meetings may leave a lasting imprint on your souls.